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International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World

Report of the Secretary-General*

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* In accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/248, sect. C, para. 1, this report is being submitted on 9 September so as to include all contributions from the United Nations system.

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I. Introduction

1. The consideration of the culture of peace gains particular relevance during the year 2000, the International Year for the Culture of Peace. It further creates special opportunities for the decade ahead, 2001-2010, proclaimed by the General Assembly as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. The International Decade comes amid a number of other Decades dedicated to bringing attention to important issues, including those directly relevant such as the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination (1993-2003), the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (1994-2004), the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004) and the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006).

2. The International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World can help set the course for the United Nations in the twenty-first century towards a just and peaceful global community. In particular, the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace for the Decade adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 53/243 B of 13 September 1999 calls for a global movement for a culture of peace and defines eight areas of action for the International Year for the Culture of Peace and for the International Decade. These eight areas (Assembly resolution 53/243 B, paras. 9-16) span the full range of actions needed for the transition to a culture of peace and non-violence:

(a) A culture of peace through education;

(b) Sustainable economic and social development;

(c) Respect for all human rights;

(d) Equality between women and men;

(e) Democratic participation;

(f) Understanding, tolerance and solidarity;

(g) Participatory communication and the free flow of information and knowledge;

(h) International peace and security.

3. Each of these areas of action have been priorities of the United Nations since its foundation; what is new is their linkage through the culture of peace and non-violence into a single coherent concept. Linkages have often been made (for example, democracy, development and peace; equality between women and men with development and peace, and so forth). This is the first time, however, that all these areas are interlinked so that the sum of their complementarities and synergies can be developed.

4. Moreover, the steps undertaken in the future will also be of special relevance for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, to be held in 2001 in South Africa. Furthermore, they will certainly constitute a key contribution to the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children. In fact, as the Assembly has stressed, the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World needs to be supported "for the benefit of every child of the world" (Assembly resolution 53/25, para. 4).

5. Children should be at the centre of the Decade, because, as stated in the General Assembly resolution establishing the Decade (Assembly resolution 53/25), enormous harm and suffering are being caused to children through different forms of violence at every level of society throughout the world (sixth preambular para.). The reduction and elimination of this violence are the greatest gifts that we can give to our children. Two approaches are simultaneously necessary. The global movement for a culture of peace, initiated during the International Year for the Culture of Peace, needs to be continued and strengthened in order to involve everyone, at all levels of society, in the transition from a culture of war and violence to a culture of peace and non-violence. At the same time, the specific actions undertaken during the Decade may concentrate on those aspects, particularly education, that most directly affect children. In this regard, Assembly resolution 53/25 specifically recognizes the role of education in constructing a culture of peace and non-violence, in particular the teaching of the practice of peace and non-violence to children (seventh preambular para.).

6. Hence, the present report provides a discussion on how children can be the centre of actions for a culture of peace (sect. II). This discussion is followed by the presentation of an organizational strategy for the further development of the global movement for a culture of peace (sect. III) and a survey of the specific contributions to the Decade made by the United

Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other institutions of the United Nations system (sect. IV).

II. Children at the centre

7. In order to place children at the centre of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, the programmatic actions, already foreseen in General Assembly resolution 53/243 as the basis for the Decade, should be specifically geared to their needs and involvement. Priority should be given to education, including the teaching of the practice of peace and non-violence to children (seventh preambular para.). All other areas of action for a culture of peace should take children into special consideration. Hence, for example, democratic principles and practices (Assembly resolution 53/243 B, para. 13 (b)) should be learned by children through practice in both formal and non-formal learning environments, and through meaningful opportunities for participation in civil society. Furthermore, actions in other areas, especially those for development (para. 10) and communication (para. 15 and in particular 15 (f)), should measure their results in terms of their impact on children. In the partnerships and communication systems developed for the Decade, children should be involved as active participants as much as possible.

8. Education for a culture of peace and non-violence should follow the approach provided in the Declaration on the Rights of the Child[1] and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,[2] namely, that of "preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origins" (Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 29, para. 1 (d)), with responsibility assumed not only by schools and other educational settings but also by mass media (ibid., article 17 (a)).

9. This recalls the constitutional mandate of UNESCO to suggest "educational methods best suited to prepare the children of the world for the responsibilities of freedom".[3] Most recently, this approach has been reflected in the conclusions of the Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments,[4] adopted by the World Education Forum (Dakar, April 2000), that "all children, young people and adults have the human right to benefit from an education that will meet their basic learning needs in the best and fullest sense of the term, an education that includes learning to know, to do, to live together and to be".[5]

10. Education should be engaged in the broad sense of the term — not only formal education in schools but also out-of-school and informal education in the full range of social institutions, including the family and the media. It should involve the full participation of Governments, intergovernmental organizations and the civil society. The strategy should follow the strategy adopted by the education ministers of the world for education for peace, human rights and democracy:[6] an approach that is comprehensive and holistic, involving all educational partners and various agents of socialization, including non-governmental organizations and community organizations in a process of democratic participation. This should include reflection upon their own current values, attitudes and practices with respect to peaceful conflict resolution, in recognition of their impact as role models for young people. Education for a culture of peace should be based upon universal principles and at the same time build upon the unique traditions and experiences of each society.

11. The contents of education for a culture of peace and non-violence should promote the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behaviours corresponding to the definition provided by the General Assembly resolution establishing the Decade (Assembly resolution 53/25, preambular para. 5), namely, knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behaviours:

- That reflect and inspire social interaction and sharing based on the principles of freedom, justice and democracy, human rights and social justice, tolerance and solidarity;
- That reject violence and endeavour to prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation;
- That guarantee the full exercise of all rights and the means to participate fully in the development process of their society.

12. At the levels of formal and non-formal education, the modalities of action for promoting a culture of peace and non-violence include:

- Training of Ministry of Education personnel, teacher trainers, school administrators, non-governmental organizations, teachers, facilitators and youth leaders in the content, learning methods and skills needed to promote peace and non-violence, it being understood that such training should enable adults to create environments that not only teach about a culture of peace, but model it in the policies and practices of the classroom, the school and other learning environments;
- Revision of curriculum materials, and particularly of history textbooks, to promote mutual understanding and strengthen social cohesion and to remove prejudices or stereotypes against certain groups;
- Creation of new curriculum materials addressing peace, non-violence and human rights, where appropriate to the culture and the learning environment;
- Production and dissemination of educational materials and textbooks on education for a culture of peace and human rights with a view to providing guidelines to teachers and educational personnel;
- Provision of opportunities for all members of the school community or other context for learning (children, parents, teachers/facilitators, administrators) to participate in democratic decision-making and governance processes as appropriate;
- Promotion of linguistic pluralism and encouragement of multilingualism, including literacy and education in the mother language and local languages of minority groups as a fundamental human right;
- Networking of national institutions, non-governmental organizations and civics education specialists with a view to integrating the various approaches relating to education for a culture of peace within a common conceptual framework;
- Strengthening pilot projects, as a means to coordinate and encourage experimental activities promoting education for international understanding and cooperation;
- Encouraging evaluation of projects relating to a culture of peace, so as to assess their actual impact on the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and behaviours of their beneficiaries;
- Development of methods of peaceful conflict resolution and non-violence in formal and non-formal educational contexts, as well as in the wider community, to include traditional conflict resolution approaches, methods that take into consideration the current political climate, and new information technologies, where appropriate;
- Strengthening the active role of the family and the local community in a participatory approach to determining what a culture of peace means, and how it is to be promoted in the local context;
- Special educational programmes for children who are the victims of violent conflicts, such as orphans, refugees, displaced persons and even child soldiers, as well as special programmes for children who are the victims of the marginalization, homelessness and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) endemic in many parts of the world, even in developed countries;
- Recognition that approaches to promoting a culture of peace and non-violence may be different in societies that are not undergoing armed conflict, in societies in which there is widespread intolerance or civil unrest, in contexts of armed conflict, and in post-conflict societies.

13. At the level of informal education (out of school), much can be done to promote a culture of peace. By actively taking part in sports, dance, theatre and other athletic and artistic activities, children learn fair play, sharing and other values, attitudes and behaviours of a culture of peace. At the same time, they learn as observers and consumers of a wide range of communication and artistic products: books, films, paintings, theatre, dance, sporting events, music, games — the list is almost endless. As pointed out in the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, all those who are involved in the creation of these products have an obligation to promote in them the values, attitudes and behaviours of a culture of peace. At the same time, they should refrain from the promotion of violence, intolerance, racism and sexual exploitation.

14. The mass media are especially important. The advances in communication technology have greatly increased both the amount of time that each person interacts with the mass media and the effectiveness of the messages received. This is particularly crucial with regard to children who are especially vulnerable because they do not have sufficient experience on the basis of which they can evaluate the messages they receive. Each day children are being exposed to and influenced by excessive violence in the press, television, cinema, video games and the Internet, including not only films but also cartoons, comics, even news programmes. Sexual exploitation, including sexual abuse of children, has become pervasive in much of the media, particularly the Internet.

15. To redress this situation and to ensure that all of the mass media contribute education that promotes a culture of peace, concerted action at all levels of society is needed. Each person, both as an individual and in their professional and social roles, and each institution of the society has an important role to play:

- Children and young adults are the most important target group for much of the mass media. They need to learn how to discriminate and evaluate media products, in terms both of their ethical contents and of their truthfulness (for example, in the case of violent images). Equipped with this knowledge, they can have a powerful influence on the media. On the positive side, they may place collective demands as consumers on the media for products that are of benefit to them. On the negative side, they can ignore or reject products that promote violence, intolerance and exploitation;

- The family, which provides emotional support and values, is key to enable children and young adults to discriminate, evaluate and influence media productions. Support should be provided to the family, such as pedagogic tools, media campaigns and so forth;

- Teachers, in all disciplines, are especially important in respect of educating children to discriminate and evaluate media productions, and they should receive specific encouragement and support for this task;

- Schools, parents associations and local communities can play an important role through their impact on children, the family and the society as a whole by helping to instil basic values and discrimination skills and to impart experiences in respect of taking collective action as consumers;

- Consumer organizations and institutions play an important role by monitoring the media, analysing its effects, providing information and educational materials and helping to organize and exert collective consumer pressure on those who produce and distribute the media;

- Local authorities, parliaments and national Governments should encourage the media to promote a culture of peace and non-violence as well as monitor and regulate the media to eliminate intolerance, sexual abuse and excessive violence;

- Intergovernmental organizations have a special role to play, not only as advocates, but also as advisers for regulation by local authorities, parliaments and national Governments, because of the fact that much of the media — for example, the Internet — transcends national borders;

- Writers, designers, directors, producers, distributors, managers, owners, shareholders and media enterprises in general are ultimately responsible for the content and effects of media productions. Therefore, they have the most basic responsibility to avoid intolerance, sexual abuse and excessive violence and to encourage the values, attitudes and behaviours of a culture of peace and non-violence. Initiatives to sensitize, train and/or advocate for a culture of peace among media producers should be created so as to address the concerns of these groups, including market forces that influence media content.

III. Organizational strategy for the global movement for a culture of peace

16. In providing the basis for the programme of action for the Decade, the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace have called for the development of a "global movement for a culture of peace" (General Assembly resolution 53/243 B, para. 6). The strategy needed for this global movement, already under way during the International Year for the

Culture of Peace, corresponds to the general strategy proposed by the Secretary-General for the United Nations in the twenty-first century — one that emphasizes (a) partnerships and (b) new information technologies (see report of the Secretary-General entitled "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century" (A/54/2000), sect. VI).

17. As regards the development of the global movement for a culture of peace, General Assembly resolution 53/243 B calls for the encouragement and strengthening of partnerships between and among the various actors (Member States, civil society and the United Nations system, in particular UNESCO (paras. 2-6). In this way, the broad scope of the culture of peace concept can be used to coordinate and federate the actions of existing movements, and governmental and non-governmental institutions that may address only one or a few of the various areas of action. The various partners should be invited to celebrate together their achievements in establishing a culture of peace and non-violence at annual events in each country coinciding with the International Day of Peace. Experience from the International Year for the Culture of Peace in 1999 and 2000 suggests that it would be useful to fix the same date each year for this day, rather than link it to the opening day of the current session of the Assembly, the date of which is not announced in time for the adequate planning of events to occur.

18. Sharing of information among the various actors on their initiatives for a culture of peace is given priority by General Assembly resolution 53/243 B (para. 7). Actions to support participatory communication and the free flow of information and knowledge should include increased use of new information technologies, including the Internet (para. 15; especially 15 (f)). New information technologies provide an unprecedented tool for the coordination of local efforts by partners throughout the world, and they make possible the development of a "global consciousness" on the part of participants in these local efforts arising from their knowing that they are part of a global movement.

19. The durability and further development of the global movement for a culture of peace depend on the sustained activity of the more than 200 national committees and focal points, the thousands of organizations and the tens of millions of individuals already engaged during the International Year for the Culture of Peace as well as new countries, organizations and individuals who join in the years to come. There is need for continued coordination of this movement by the United Nations in two respects. First, the United Nations provides a source of legitimacy by recognizing national focal points and developing organizational partnerships, thus helping to ensure both the universality of the movement and that its major participants act in harmony with the principles of a culture of peace. Second, it provides a communications framework whereby the actors can exchange information on what they are doing and the participants can develop a consciousness that their actions on a local level are part of a movement on a global scale.

A. Partnerships

20. The development of National Committees for the Decade in the Member States will be based on the system of national focal points and national committees already functioning for the coordination of the International Year for the Culture of Peace. These focal points and national committees, already active in more than 160 Member States as of spring 2000, are based on the National Commissions for UNESCO and the field offices of UNESCO in the countries concerned, as well as the United Nations Coordinators in each country. In a majority of these countries, there is already an active involvement of the national Governments, often including the head of State, and in many countries, of the national and regional parliaments as well. Special consideration should be given to the involvement and participation of youth in the Committees.

21. The development of partnerships with the civil society for implementation of actions contributing to a culture of peace will be based on the system of agreements already established for the International Year for the Culture of Peace. The backbone of this network of partnerships consists of the international non-governmental organizations associated with UNESCO which represent tens of millions of members, as well as other international non-governmental organizations associated only with the Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat or the Economic and Social Council. In parallel at the national and local level, the National Focal Points have established partnerships with a large number of associations, universities, schools, media organizations and enterprises which should be further developed. In

this regard, special importance should be given to partnerships with cities, towns and national parliaments that may be encouraged to develop action plans and legislation for a culture of peace and non-violence, and with youth organizations.

B. New information technologies

22. The communication systems established during the International Year for the Culture of Peace will be continued and made available to serve all those who are partners in the work of the Decade. This includes a pair of Internet web sites dedicated to the International Year for the Culture of Peace, one exclusively for the use of partners and the other for the general public. Information entered by the partners on the exclusive site, their events, their news articles and signatures gathered on the Manifesto 2000 (see para. 23) are automatically posted on the public site in order to give an up-to-the-minute overview of the state of the global movement for a culture of peace.

23. Making full use of new information technologies, the global network of international partners and national focal points and partners have gathered millions of signatures of individuals on the Manifesto 2000, which engages each signatory to practice a culture of peace and non-violence in his or her family, school and community. The six points of the Manifesto 2000 (respect all life, reject violence, share with others, listen to understand, preserve the planet, rediscover solidarity) were written by Nobel Peace Prize Laureates to translate the areas of action for a culture of peace identified by the General Assembly into a pedagogy of everyday life. Schools and schoolchildren have taken the lead in the adoption and diffusion of the Manifesto. An increasing proportion of signatures are by Internet with a return email address by which the signatories can be informed about actions at a local level at the same time as they are linked to the global movement.

Communication network of local projects

24. To the extent possible, each person signing the Manifesto will be invited to take part in local projects promoting one or more of the eight action areas of a culture of peace and non-violence. This will be made possible by an Internet communication system providing information on the local projects undertaken by the partners that have signed agreements for the International Year for the Culture of Peace. This is a participatory system, as each partner project is responsible for entering its information directly, providing, in addition to a brief description of its action, information on what it can give and what it would like to receive in exchange from other projects — in sum, an "on-line" market place for local initiatives.

Moderated information exchange network

25. Furthermore, individuals signing the Manifesto will be invited to be reporters (and moderators, if they wish training) in a global network of multilingual Internet sites providing information on activities and media events that promote one or more of the eight action areas of a culture of peace. Partnerships for sites in English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian and Chinese have been established so far and there is no limit on the number of languages possible. This innovative system is based on an expandable network of partner web sites adhering to basic principles of a culture of peace with trained volunteer moderators at each web site who help the reporters by email to rewrite their reports in order that those reports may correspond to the criteria ("rules of the game") before they are put on-line. Among its other effects, this network should help increase the audience demand for films, video programmes and games that promote the principles of a culture of peace, with priority given to the reports of schools and schoolchildren.

26. In order for the majority of the world's population who do not have Internet access to participate in the exchange of information on the work of the Decade, special efforts should be made to extend access to new technologies to the unreached. In this regard, the experiences of interactive web initiatives such as UNICEF's Voices of Youth project for young people (http://www.unicef.org/voy/) and Teachers Talking About Learning for adults (http://www.unicef.org/teachers) have useful lessons to share in terms of bridging the digital divide.

27. In addition, special consideration should be given to communication systems that do not rely on new technologies, but can encourage inclusion of all segments of society in the activities of the Decade.

IV. Actions by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other institutions of the United Nations system

28. In the process of elaborating a new Medium-Term Strategy (2002-2007), UNESCO will give full consideration to the Organization's contribution to implementation of the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace adopted by the General Assembly. In particular, UNESCO will play a leading role in promoting education for a culture of peace within the framework of the World Education Forum (Dakar, 2000) and the strategy outlined above. UNESCO activities for the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World will be articulated with those undertaken for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations (2001) and the follow-up to the United Nations Year for Tolerance (1995). In order to address specific aspects of violence where children are the first to suffer, support will be provided to educational initiatives in post-conflict situations, to independent media that provide spaces for dialogue and mutual understanding in zones of conflict and tension, and to advocacy measures that address the issue of violence in the media.

29. UNESCO should continue to play its important coordinating role in the global movement for a culture of peace. Building on the achievements of the International Year for the Culture of Peace, for which it was the focal point, UNESCO should serve as the lead agency for the Decade and be responsible for the inter-organizational aspects of the programmes and activities of the United Nations system and other organizations concerned. This will include the organization of reviews and appraisals of the implementation of the programme of action for the Decade at mid-point in 2005 and at the end of the Decade in 2010. UNESCO will continue to coordinate the network of National Committees and National Focal Points developed during the International Year so that they become the basis for national mobilization during the Decade. Similarly, the Organization will coordinate the transition from the Year to the Decade of the network of partnerships with international organizations. UNESCO will continue to develop and make available the various Internet-based communication systems developed during the International Year so they can serve all those working for the Decade.

30. UNICEF believes that education is a key strategy for preventing conflict and intolerance, and securing conditions conducive to peace. It has developed a wide range of peace education programmes, which are designed to: (a) provide children with the skills needed to resolve everyday conflict, such as communication and problem-solving skills; (b) give children positive, fulfilling experiences to promote self-esteem and confidence; and (c) give children a greater understanding of other peoples and cultures, so as to reduce negative stereotypes and promote diversity and universal values. UNICEF's work in this area has been guided by article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and as UNICEF declared in its "Anti-War Agenda", "disputes may be inevitable but violence is not. To prevent continued cycles of conflict, education must seek to promote peace and tolerance, not fuel hatred and suspicion".

31. Among UNICEF's many initiatives are the following:

- The "Education for Conflict Resolution" project in Sri Lanka, which has brought peaceful problem-solving methods and communication skills into the primary school system, with the goal of helping to reconcile divided communities and preventing future conflicts. More than 1 million primary schoolchildren have benefited from the programme, and the approach is now being introduced into the secondary school system. Teachers' guides and training manuals have been produced, and workshops have been held to sensitize media producers to issues of violence and to encourage media for children that promote more peaceful values and attitudes;
- The "Values for Life" project in Egypt, which has developed interactive materials to help children in non-formal educational settings develop skills of cooperation, communication and respect for gender and religious differences;
- The "Children's Movement for Peace" in Colombia, which began as a social mobilization campaign to encourage children nationwide to vote on the rights most important to them: the increased awareness of peace and social justice issues that resulted has led to youth involvement in peace marches, child-to-child projects for

internally displaced children, and projects promoting peace in schools;

- The "Education for Peace" project, which has three main components and in which UNICEF and the Rwandan Government have cooperated. The knowledge skills and attitudes necessary for cooperation and conflict resolution have been integrated into the primary school curriculum. Youth solidarity camps have brought youth from both main ethnic groups together, with the aim of putting the principles of Education for Peace into action through special community projects contributing to national reconstruction. An Education for Peace approach has also been included in non-formal literacy programmes, particularly those targeting girls and women.

32. UNICEF is in the process of evaluating its peace education projects, placing a special emphasis on the impact on the behaviours of the projects' audiences. UNICEF sponsored a workshop on evaluating peace education projects in May 2000, to encourage reflection by project officers on appropriate evaluation questions, designs, indicators, methods and instruments. A working paper will be published in 2000 that will synthesize the experiences of UNICEF country offices in this area.

33. UNICEF has developed a Peace Education Working Paper which addresses peace education as a process of promoting the skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level.

34. In addition to its programme activity, each member of the United Nations system is encouraged to engage its own network of partners, including those of the civil society, in the work of the Decade, addressing the needs and involvement of children in the context of a global movement for a culture of peace.

Notes

[1] General Assembly resolution 1386 (XIV).

[2] General Assembly resolution 44/25, annex.

[3] Constitution of UNESCO, article I, para. 2 (b). Accessed at http://www.unesco.org/confgen/enold/articles/constit.htm#1.

[4] Accessed at http://www2.unesco.org/wef/en-conf/dakframeng.shtm.

[5] Ibid., para. 3.

[6] Declaration and Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy, contained in the report of the 44th session of the International Conference on Education, Geneva, 3-8 October 1994, specifically paragraph 14 of the Framework of Action. Accessed at http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/34-69.pdf Also found in UNESCO, *Records of the General Conference, Twenty-eighth Session, Paris, 25 October to 16 November 1995*, vol. 1, *resolutions* (Paris, UNESCO, 1996), chap. IV.A.5.41, annexes I and II.